

Healthy Aging Communication Network

Living Stronger & Longer



Older Adults and Cancer

What is the magnitude of the problem?

Nationwide cancer is the second leading cause of death for women and men. This is of special concern for older adults since the incidence of cancer increases with age. The Arizona mortality rate for cancer among those less than 65 is 53.2 per 100,000 compared to 876.1 per 100,000 for those aged 65 and older. In other words, about 19 individuals aged 65 and older die from cancer everyday. Cancer of the lungs, bronchus, and trachea was the leading cause of cancer deaths in Arizona among persons age 65 and older.

What is the cost?

National Institutes of Health (NIH) estimates the overall costs related to cancer in the United States for 2006 is \$206.3 billion, both direct and indirect. In Arizona in 2005, costs for hospitalizations when cancer was the primary diagnosis were approximately at \$168 million, with an average of nearly \$48,000 per stay. Hospitalization data are from state hospitals only; federal facilities (Veterans Affairs and Indian Health Services) are not included.

Who is at risk?

Anyone is at risk for cancer, but this risk increases with age. Certain behaviors, such as cigarette smoking, physical inactivity and a diet high in calories and fat have been associated with an increased risk of developing cancer.

What is our response?

Prevention and/or early detection of cancer are important. Early screening for cancers; such as breast, cervical, prostate and colon cancer may result in better success with effective treatment and survival. Knowing the symptoms and signs for early detection are essential. A healthy lifestyle may reduce the risk for developing cancer and includes:

- A healthy diet with five or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day, good

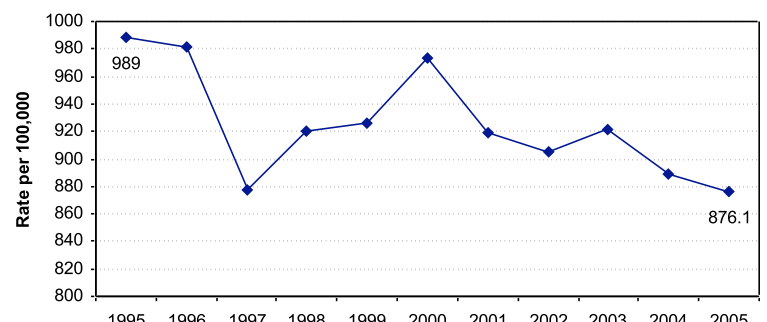
nutritional sources of protein, and a limited amount of fats.

- Include physical activity for 30 minutes or more in each day.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Avoid cigarette smoking and limit alcohol consumption.
- Wear protective clothing and/or sunscreen when outdoors and avoid artificial sources of light such as tanning beds.

Knowing the signs and symptoms of cancer are also important. The following are some signs and symptoms:

- A nagging cough and hoarseness
- Indigestion or difficulty swallowing
- A sore that does not heal
- Unusual bleeding or discharge
- An unusual lesion or sore on the skin

Mortality Rate for Cancer among Older Persons (65 years and older), Arizona, 1995-2005



Source: Arizona Health Status and Vital Statistics

To learn about Healthy Aging Arizona, please contact Ramona Rusinak at (602) 364-0526 or visit the Healthy Aging Arizona website at <http://www.azdhs.gov/phs/healthyagingarizona/index.htm>

Updated August 2007